

Metropolitan King County Councilmember Carolyn Edmonds

Keeping our Community in good health

Dear Neighbor,

Look at the map on the cover of this pamphlet and you will find Overweight and Obesity rates in King County. What the map doesn't show is that these rates are steadily rising and that the Obesity rate has more than *doubled* since 1990. I hope this is as unsettling to you as it was to me.

As Chair of the King County Board of Health, it was my honor to kick off an attempt to find solutions to this growing problem. On Wednesday, September 15, the King County Board of Health, the University of Washington School of Public Health and Community Medicine, and Public Health - Seattle & King County hosted the Overweight Prevention Symposium at the Shoreline Center.

More than 200 people from school districts, healthcare providers, government officials and public health departments participated in the symposium. The group also heard from a panel of experts who presented new information on the Overweight/Obesity epidemic and how it is related to our community. Information presented included:

- how King County's neighborhood design influences Overweight and Obesity rates;
- how socioeconomic factors affects Overweight and Obesity rates;
- how commute time affects the risk of becoming Overweight or Obese,

After the panel presentations, small groups discussed how our community can reduce its Overweight and Obesity rates. In six months the groups will meet again to discuss how to implement some of the ideas borne in the first meeting.

Inside this newsletter I will share with you what we learned and what was accomplished. Also, inside is information on preparing healthy meals and tips on how to be more physically active.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the Overweight Prevention Symposium or if you would like to participate in the next meeting.

With best regards,


Carolyn

In this issue:

- Report from the Overweight Prevention Symposium
- Information on Healthy Meal Preparation
- How you can increase your level of physical activity



King County

What was Learned

Obesity and Overweight are medical terms that describe an unhealthy ratio between a person's height and weight. Studies show that Obesity contributes to a variety of chronic and acute diseases including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some forms of cancer. Overweight and Obesity also complicate a variety of other diseases. It is clear that Overweight and Obesity, both preventable conditions, are burdening our already overburdened health care delivery system.



The “walkability” of your neighborhood significantly impacts your neighborhood’s obesity rates.



Councilmember Carolyn Edmonds, chair of the King County Board of Health, speaks at the recent Overweight Prevention Symposium at the Shoreline Center.

Obesity rates are steadily increasing through all demographic categories. At the symposium, it was striking to see the different obesity rates found among different segments of the population. It was also interesting to find out that obesity rates varied in differently designed neighborhoods and according to time spent commuting. Here are some other facts we learned:

- The obesity rate for high school drop outs (27%) is nearly twice that of college graduates (15%).
- Individuals earning less than \$25,000 per year are much more likely to suffer from obesity than individuals earning over \$50,000 per year.
- The “Walkability” of your neighborhood significantly impacts your neighborhood’s obesity rate.
- For every thirty minutes per day you spend in your car, you increase your likelihood of becoming obese by 3 percent.
- Healthy diets comprised of whole grains, lean proteins and fresh vegetables are more expensive than diets comprised of added fats and refined sugars.

More information about the symposium and presentations can be accessed via internet on the Public Health website www.metrokc.gov/health/overweight.

Eating Healthy

Preparing healthy meals for yourself and your family can be more expensive and time consuming than fast food alternatives.

Public Health - Seattle & King County has a good list of healthy and easy to prepare recipes that is updated weekly. Some of the more than fifty entrée recipes include Pasta Italiano, Chicken Creole and Fish Tacos. This list of healthy recipes can be found via internet at www.metrokc.gov/health/nutrition/cookbook.htm.

Another good source for finding healthy, low cost and easy to prepare meals is the

nutrition section of United States Department of Agriculture –www.usda.gov.

When choosing which foods you eat and/or prepare for your family, it is also important to consider the sugar content of the beverages you consume. A recent study published in the August 2004 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that women who drink one or more sugar-sweetened drinks a day are more likely to gain weight or develop Type 2 diabetes than women who consume few or no sugar-sweetened beverages.



Healthy meals for you and your family needn't be expensive or time-consuming.

Visit www.usda.gov or www.metrokc.gov/health/nutrition/cookbook.htm for more information.

Keeping Active

Increasing daily physical activity is also important when combating Overweight and Obesity. Public Health's website: www.metrokc.gov/health/exercise- is a great resource for finding ways to become more physically active. Some of these include:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator whenever possible.
- If you take the bus, exit a stop or two early and walk the rest of way.
- Most local malls open at 7:30 a.m. for "Mall Walking." This is a great option during bad weather.
- The Burke Gilman, Interurban and other trails provide a vehicle free way to go for a walk.



Increasing your daily physical activity is an important part of combating weight and obesity.

Each city in King County's 1st council district (Bothell, Kenmore, Shoreline and Lake Forest Park) has designed walking maps in cooperation with Public Health - Seattle & King County. You can access these maps at your city hall or visit my webpage for links www.metrokc.gov/edmonds.



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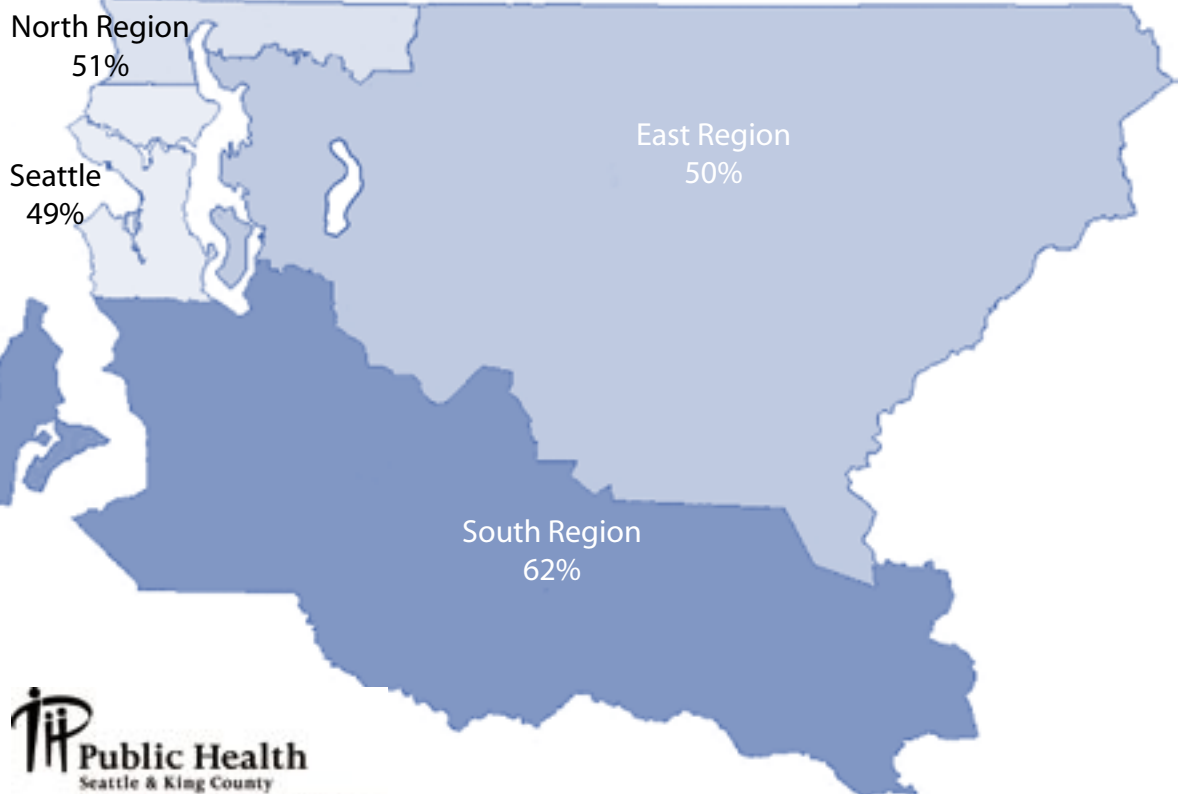
Keeping our Community Healthy



**Report from the Overweight
Prevention Symposium**

Obesity Rates in Adults Rising throughout King County

Percent of Overweight/Obese Adults by King County Regions, 2003



Obesity is a steadily growing, nationwide epidemic that effects the citizens of King County.

Since 1990, the obesity rates in King County have doubled.

As your King County Councilmember, I am working with public health organizations to curb this rising epidemic.

